

## Sullivan County NH

Type of Meeting: Sullivan County Full Delegation  
Date / Time: July 13, 2007 / 10:00 am  
Place: Sullivan County Probate Court

### Participants

Representatives: Peter Franklin (Chair), Ray Gagnon (Vice-Chair), Ellen Nielsen (Clerk), John Cloutier, Larry Converse, Tom Donovan, Brenda Ferland, Sue Gottling, Matthew Houde, Arthur Jillette, Jay Phinizy, Beverly Rodeschin and Carla Skinder

Commissioners: Ethel Jarvis and Ben Nelson

Other elected Officials and County Employees: Ed Gil de Rubio, Marc Hathaway, Sharon Johnson-Callum, John Milliken, Michael Prozzo, Cynthia Vezina and Seth Wilner  
Two public observers

Media: Aaron Aldridge, *Eagle-Times*; David Corriveau, *Valley News*; Peter Martin, Community TV

The meeting was called to order by Rep. Franklin at 10:03 am. This meeting was a continuation of the recessed County Convention of June 29, 2007.

### Agenda Review:

The main item on the agenda was to be a report and recommendation regarding the county budget for fiscal 2008 from the Executive Finance Committee of the delegation.

### Minutes of the June 29, 2007 County Convention:

**Rep. Converse moved that the minutes for June 29 be accepted and Rep. Gagnon seconded the motion.** Rep. Skinder noted that she had suggested that county employees should be informed, by the Human Resources Department, that their health insurance and retirement benefits are part of their compensation package and also should be informed how much the county pays for these benefits, and that her suggestion had not been recorded in the minutes of the county convention. Rep. Rodeschin suggested that the clerk record this comment in the minutes of this meeting, rather than changing the minutes of 6/29, and Rep. Skinder accepted this suggestion. **After a correction of a typographical error noticed by Rep. Houde, the minutes were accepted by a voice vote.**

### Report of the Executive Finance Committee:

Rep. Ferland reported on the deliberations of the EFC since June 29. The committee held many meetings and was able to recommend a number of budget cuts. Rep Ferland summarized the budget cuts, which included holding all pay increases for county employees at 3%, reducing the amount appropriated for county grants by about \$100,000, elimination of an appropriation for autopsies (which will now be picked up by the state), elimination of a proposed new position in the administrative office of the county home, reduction of the appropriation for recreational therapy at the county home, and eliminating items in the capital budget, including holds on funds for continued planning for a new correctional center and an assisted living facility. Rep. Ferland provided members of the delegation with a five-page chart showing changes made to the proposed 2008 budget between 4/4/07 and 7/12/07 in chronological order. On page 3, the chart shows that on 5/30/07, the commissioners approved a budget for \$27,629,657.00, with \$10, 594, 871.00 to be raised in taxes (the budget which was presented in a public hearing on 6/12/07.) On page 5, the chart shows the final budget proposed by the EFC, which is for \$27,330, 610.00, with \$10,369,380.00 to be raised in taxes.

The presentation by Rep. Ferland was followed by extensive discussion among the representatives and between representatives and the County Manager: Rep. Donovan asked Mr. Gil de Rubio if there was any plan to pay back the \$2,500,000.00 which the county had borrowed in fiscal 2007. Mr. Gil de Rubio responded "We will do our best." Rep. Donovan asked a follow-up question about newspaper reports that the county home is losing \$4000.00 per day. This resulted in a discussion about a drop in the nursing home census to 130 patients. Mr. Gil de Rubio said that hospitals are not referring Medicare patients to the county home and attributed this drop in referrals to uncertainty about the quality of care available during the transitional period after Genesis leaves. Rep. Franklin noted that part of the drop in the census was due to deaths of patients.

Rep Rodeschin asked what would happen if the union contract which is currently in negotiation resulted in a pay increase of more than 3%--how could we honor the contract? Rep. Ferland responded that the contract could be honored only by not filling positions. Rep. Gottling stated that the EFC had not changed the commissioners' assumptions about the contract negotiations. Rep. Rodeschin asked if it would be fair if union employees were to receive a larger pay increase than non-union employees. Rep. Gottling responded that union members pay a larger percentage of the cost of their health insurance than non-union employees (18% as opposed to 10%).

There was extensive discussion of the cut in the line item for recreational therapy. Mr. Gil de Rubio expressed concern that if recreational activities were not available on holidays and at night the nursing home would be in violation of state regulations. At the request of Rep Phinizy Rep. Donovan pointed out that the appropriation represented the actual salaries and benefits plus 15% to cover shift differential and holiday pay. Rep. Phinizy asked the commissioners what they thought. The commissioners were split—Comm. Nelson said the department heads request should have been honored but Comm. Jarvis said that the amount recommended by the EFC which left the amount of the salaries plus 15% would be enough. Rep. Ferland said that she did not support the EFC budget because she felt it was a mistake to cut any salaries. Rep. Donovan said that we owe it to the public to take note of discrepancies and correct them.

Rep. Houde asked if there had been any areas of consensus among the members of the EFC. Rep Ferland said there had not been any consensus and that there is no fluff in the budget. "We never can return any money to the taxpayers—all we can do is hold the line." Rep. Skinder agreed with Rep. Ferland that the delegation budget should not cut personnel or cut their salaries—we should retain the personnel that we have and pay them competitively. Rep. Franklin pointed out that although Genesis had promised to eliminate spending for agency nursing but that between December of 2006 and June of 2007 the nursing home had spent \$213,000.00 on agency nursing, an amount that was not appropriated in the budget. Rep. Gottling said she thought that the EFC had reached consensus on many items as they worked with the budget.

**Rep. Cloutier moved that the delegation accept the EFC recommendation and vote for a budget for fiscal 2008 of \$27,330,610.00 with \$10,369,380.00 to be raised in taxes. Rep. Gagnon seconded the motion.**

Discussion of the motion followed: Rep. Cloutier spoke to his motion, saying that although the budget was not perfect the EFC had worked hard to find cuts. With regard to holding pay increases at 3%, the delegation should remember that teachers in Claremont will receive no pay increases because the Claremont school budget was voted down. "We need to get a budget in place." Rep. Gagnon also spoke to the motion, saying that we must pass a budget and begin working together. Rep. Phinizy asked a question about one area where the EFC had increased a line item—the

Claremont Soup Kitchen had requested a county grant of \$15,000.00 and had received \$20,000.00. Rep. Cloutier said that the \$5000 increase was a one-time-only event and was added because the soup kitchen serves the entire county and may need to re-locate soon.

Rep. Rodeschin asked if the public participants could be allowed to add their comments to the discussion. Rep. Franklin said that this meeting was not a public hearing and that members of the public could not make comments unless asked a specific question by members of the delegation.

**Rep. Rodeschin said that if members of the public were not allowed to speak then she would make a motion to move the question (on Rep. Cloutier's motion to pass the EFC budget). Rep. Skinder seconded this motion. Rep. Franklin said that he would not accept Rep. Rodeschin's motion to move the question because there were people who wished to speak. Rep. Rodeschin moved to challenge the chair. Rep Skinder seconded this motion.**

Rep. Phinizy made a parliamentary inquiry—If he wanted to amend Rep. Cloutier's motion would he vote against the challenge to the chair? Rep. Franklin answered that he would. Rep. Ferland offered a further parliamentary inquiry—asking the chair to explain why county employees in the audience should not be allowed to participate in the discussion of the budget. Rep. Franklin repeated his statement that this meeting was not a public hearing and that county employees would not be allowed to speak unless asked a question by a member of the delegation. Rep. Nielsen said that she wanted to ask a question of the person who had had his hand raised for some time, and was cut off because a motion to challenge the chair, a non-debatable motion, was on the floor.

**Rep. Franklin asked for a show of hands vote on the motion to challenge the chair. The motion failed by a vote of 3 to 10.**

Rep. Phinizy observed that if the delegation had been allowed to vote on Rep. Rodeschin's original motion to move the question that motion would have failed.

Rep. Donovan said that before voting on Rep. Cloutier's motion to pass the EFC budget he wanted to ask the commissioners if they would be able to address the concerns of the delegation more fully than they had during the previous year by providing the delegation with financial information in a timely manner. Comm. Jarvis said that she could only speak for herself but that she would provide requested financial information to any member of the delegation.

Rep. Franklin then spoke against the motion to pass the EFC budget: He said that in its urgency to present a budget at this meeting the EFC had created an arbitrary deadline and that the budget did not need to be presented until the end of August. There still are problems with the budget which must be fixed. The commissioners' budget and the EFC budget differ by only \$300,000.00. Both budgets ignore the problem of the \$2,500,000.00, which was borrowed in fiscal 2007 and must be paid back. The county has no money and must immediately begin borrowing again. The county has spent more than was appropriated during fiscal 2007 and this is contrary to statute.

Rep. Donovan said that we have to pass the budget today and move on and work as a team. The delegation needs a commitment [to candor] from the commissioners and the delegation needs to be more patient and become more familiar with county government.

Rep. Ferland stated that she had asked the EFC to consider how to repay the debt by adding money for loan repayment to the budget, and said that the EFC would be meeting early in August.

**Rep. Phinizy offered a motion to amend the motion to pass the EFC budget by reducing the county grant to the Claremont Soup Kitchen by \$5000. The motion was seconded by Rep. Gottling.**

Discussion followed. Rep. Skinder said we should not make cuts that will impact on the well-being of our community. Rep. Ferland said that it sets a bad precedent to give any agency a larger grant than they have requested. Rep. Converse pointed out that the Federal funding for the soup kitchen had been cut after the grant request had been made. Rep. Donovan said that he would abstain from voting on this amendment because he is on the board of the soup kitchen.

**Rep. Franklin called for a vote on the amendment to cut the grant for the soup kitchen by \$5000.00 and Rep. Ferland requested a roll call vote. The motion failed, with representatives voting as follows:**

**YES: Ferland, Houde and Phinizy**

**ABSTAINING: Donovan**

**NO: Cloutier, Converse, Franklin, Gagnon, Gottling, Jillette, Nielsen, Rodeschin and Skinder**

**Rep. Ferland then moved the question on Rep. Cloutier's motion to pass the EFC budget. Representatives voted unanimously to move the question.**

**Rep. Franklin then asked for a roll call vote on the motion to pass the EFC budget for a sum of \$27,330,610.00 with \$10,369,380.00 to be raised in taxes.**

**The motion passed, with representatives voting as follows:**

**YES: Cloutier, Converse, Donovan, Gagnon, Gottling, Jillette, and Nielsen**

**NO: Ferland, Franklin, Houde, Phinizy Rodeschin and Skinder**

Rep. Franklin announced that he would be calling for a delegation meeting at the end of August and at that time he would be resigning as chair of the delegation because he could not sign the MS-42 for the fiscal 2008 budget. Between now and that meeting, delegates should consider whom they wanted to elect as chair for the rest of the biennium.

**Rep. Ferland made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:20 pm. The motion passed unanimously.**

Next Steps:

Meeting of the Executive Finance Committee in early August at the call of the chair.  
Full delegation meeting at the end of August at the call of the chair.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Ellen Nielsen, Clerk